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## PICTURES AND THEIR OWNERS.

## II.—THE THOMAS B. CLARKE COLLECTION.



COLLECTING works of art is either a mania, an exact science, or a fashion. It is commonly the former or the latter. In the case of Mr. Clarke, however, it is rather a fulfillment of the second than of either the preceding or the concluding condition. There certainly never has been a collection made in this country in which the selection was as careful and as completely representative, and the result as splendid in its entirety. There are more magnificent and costly collections than Mr. Clarke's; but no collection as individual and deserving of as much respect from the American public. It is small credit to a very rich man that he has filled a gallery with the most expensive foreign pictures the dealers could find for him. But when a gentleman of moderate means sets out, as Mr. Clarke did, to build up a representative collection of native art, and by diligence in seeking and intelligence in picking out when found creates a gathering of 300 such pictures as he owns, he establishes himself as a true connoisseur. Any one could have done it. The door of the studio was as open to the railway millionaire as to him. But he climbed the studio stairs, while the millionaire telegraphed to his professional expert and had his collection created by proxy.

The collection of Mr. Clarke now numbers over 300 pictures. Its quality has been much improved since its exhibition at the American Art Galleries two years ago. Mr. Clarke began buying pictures, as all men do, with certain ideas and fancies, which time and experience broadened and ripened. So, as his ideal advanced, he applied its teachings to the pruning down and building up of his collection. The result is that a much stronger and more homogeneous array of pictures than the public wots of is now hidden away in the snug little house in West Forty-fourth Street,



PUZZLED, BY LOUIS MOELLER.

where, from the hall door to the garret stairs, American art finds hospitable shelter.

There are few names of importance in our art which are unrepresented here. More than one among them achieved its first importance from the patronage of the owner of the collection. The presence of some of the strongest works given out by our younger painters draws especial attention to the fact that it was among the disciples of the newer school that Mr. Clarke made his most numerous investments, and that it was in the studios



CAPMAKER AT WORK, BY HENRY ALEXANDER.

of the least known talents that he sought for the material which most enriches his collection. It would be much easier to make note of the painters of sterling merit who are not, than to recapitulate the long list of those who are, enrolled in the array of productions which do credit to our art and to their owner's judgment. It is no exaggeration to state that the collection of Mr. Clarke is unique. He owns, certainly, the finest gathering of native pictures in America, and as out of America no one collects native pictures, it is, consequently, the finest anywhere. It would not be safe to predict that its exhibition in Europe would create an enthusiasm; but it certainly would be received with earnest attention and profound interest.

The importance of Mr. Clarke's collection is intrinsic. It is in the quality of the work it holds, rather than in the popularly imposing character of the works themselves. It is not a collection of big and showy gallery pictures. Douglas Volk's "Accused of Witchcraft," George de Forest Brush's "Mourning Her Brave," Charles F. Ulrich's "Glass-blowers," the pictures of George Inness, of Bolton Jones, T. W. Dewing, E. H. Blashfield and Francis C. Jones; Alfred Kappes' "Closing Hymn," and Francis Miller's "Caboose of the Local Freight," are among those which command attention as holding the best art of some of our best men. In some cases there are individuals who own more important works by the same men; but in no case are these part of an entire collection such as this. In certain of the works of Messrs. Louis Moeller, F. C. Jones, Ulrich, Miller, Brush, Volk, Thomas P. Anshutz ("Ironworker's Noontime"), W. T. Smedley ("The Weekly Mail" and "Embarrassment"), Percy Moran ("An Old Time Melody"), Leon Moran ("Eel Fishing"), George Inness

("A Gray Lowery Day") and Thomas Eakins ("Professionals at Rehearsal"), their peers from the same hands would be difficult to find in any collection.

In December, 1883, Mr. Clarke made an exhibition of his pictures which probably did more to open the eyes of the public to the power and the potentialities of American art than a year's scolding in the newspapers would. His collection has been largely recruited and strengthened since then; but it was sufficient to do its work as it was. The purpose of Mr. Clarke in making this exhibition was double. He wished to present the claims of native art for popular consideration in a way which would admit of no denial of its merit, and to secure the means of establishing a prize for the best painted American figure composition shown at the spring exhibition of the Academy of Design. He succeeded in both purposes. The fashion of buying American pictures out of studios and exhibitions has been made popular with people who never dreamed of buying American pictures before. The Clarke prize of \$300 is now an annual event at the Academy. The prize was won in 1884 by Charles F. Ulrich, the prize winner being "The Land of Promise," now in the Evans collection, for which, indeed, it was painted. Francis C. Jones took the prize for the present year with his fine little genre, "Exchanging Confidences," which belongs to Mr. Clarke.

The Clarke prize fund was the first to be established of the two which are now annually contested for at the Academy. The first Hallgarten prize was taken in 1884 by a picture in the Clarke collection, Louis Moeller's remarkable single figure study, "Puzzled."

The formation of his collection has been, with Mr. Clarke, the work of years. The love for pictures was instinctive with him, and he began its indulgence before his critical faculty was developed. But experience proved in his case, as it must in every one's possessed of the latent refinement necessary to the appreciation of art, the best educator. He learned wisdom through his errors, and fortified himself against future



THE PURITAN MAIDEN, BY DOUGLAS VOLK.

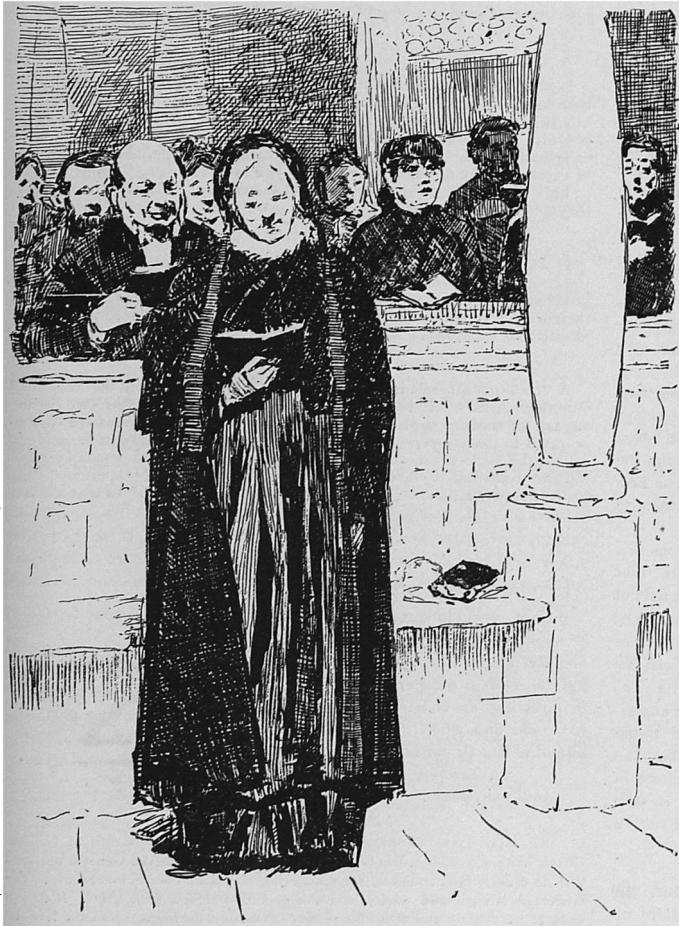
mistakes by noting those of the present. He is to-day one of the shrewdest and most intelligent buyers of pictures in the country, a man whose judgment is as certain as his taste is true. Our art owes him a great deal more than some of its professors are inclined to admit. His example has been a permanent and cumulative benefit to it, whose value is not to be estimated by mere commercial returns.

#### THE ART UNION MONTHLY.

FROM this number forth THE ART UNION will be published as a monthly, being issued within the second week of each month. As our opportunities enlarge, the dimensions of our magazine will also increase. In this regard we look to our good friends, the public, to encourage us. The friends of American Art have now an opportunity of subscribing to and supporting an American Art monthly. If they and the artists of America desire a publication which will represent their interests, whose voice will ever be raised in the cause of our Art, and whose columns will never be closed to its service or defense, this is their chance. THE ART UNION, having taken a new lease of life, now proposes to ascertain if life is worth living.

It is our ambition to make THE ART UNION the art magazine of the western continent, and a power for good in the art of the continent. We shall not rest satisfied until it equals in size and importance the most important publications of the kind in the world, and when it does, we will still endeavor to outstrip them. We know there is a necessity for us, and we have already proved that there is room for us. But we are not high enough up yet to suit us, and we want the public to help us to the altitude to which we aspire.

We have already a large list of subscribers. Every one of these should be able to add at least another to our roll among his or her friends, and these newcomers ought, in turn, to spread the circle of our clientele. A good word dropped in time is fruitful seed—and a sample copy of THE ART UNION can be obtained on application.



THE CLOSING HYMN, BY ALFRED KAPPES.